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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we trust You for protection and peace, for You have promised to guide us by Your grace. May we place our hope in You and never forget how You have sustained us in the past.

Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to do what is best for America. Continue to rule from Heaven so that Your purposes will prevail on Earth.

Hear the cries of the helpless and do for them through our lawmakers what they can't do for themselves. Bring justice and righteousness to our Nation and world as You transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

We pray in Your sacred Name.
Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, there has been a lot of focus lately on the drama here in Washington. For weeks now, as leading Democrats blocked more pandemic relief over unrelated liberal demands, the press has covered their stonewalling like any ordinary political standoff. Who talked

to whom? Who said what in which meeting? What new metaphor did Speaker PELOSI use today to explain that she was blocking progress? But it does the Nation a disservice to act like the last several weeks were just another routine political standoff. It does struggling families and laid-off workers and stressed-out school principals and healthcare professionals a disservice to act like this has just been more Washington gridlock.

The New York Times proclaimed a few days ago that "[Speaker] PELOSI is playing hardball on coronavirus relief." Well, that is one way to put it. You could say it is "playing hardball" to refuse any outcome for the country. You could say it is "playing hardball" to insist on non-COVID-related liberal policy changes that the Speaker and the Democratic leader know would never pass the Senate or be signed into law by the President.

But if Democrats are "playing hardball," their opponents aren't us Republicans—not really.

They are playing hardball against kids, workers, and vulnerable Americans who need help.

They are playing hardball against our medical system when the Speaker and the Democratic leader say they won't allow another dime for testing, treatments, or vaccines unless they can bring home a massive tax cut for millionaires in San Francisco and New York City.

They are playing hardball against our Nation's ability to detect and fight the virus.

They are playing hardball against science when the Speaker and the Democratic leader say they will not allow another cent for schools to reopen or for the job-saving PPP unless they get \$1 trillion for a State and local slush fund that is completely out of proportion to actual needs.

They are playing hardball against children and parents when the Speaker and the Democratic leader say they

will not allow any resolution on any issue unless Democrats can pay people more not to work.

They are playing hardball against millions of households that ought to get another stimulus check and against the ability of jobless people to get any Federal benefit whatsoever.

There are life-and-death matters at stake, but Democrats have treated this historic national crisis as a political game. Just look at the redlines the Democratic leaders have drawn around these negotiations. Imagine sitting down with a working family at their kitchen table and explaining that these are the kinds of issues over which the Speaker and the Democratic leader are refusing—refusing—to let them have relief.

First, as I mentioned, the Democratic leader has made clear he doesn't want any pandemic relief to become law unless—unless—it carries a special State and local tax carve-out for high earners in places like New York.

Just imagine these Democratic leaders from New York and San Francisco going anywhere in the middle of the country and telling a working family of four, earning \$40,000 a year, that they aren't getting a relief check that could increase their income by 10 percent until millionaires in Manhattan get a tax cut.

Economists on all sides have panned this. A huge, costly tax cut for wealthy people in blue States is not the life raft that struggling people need. Even liberal economists have jumped ship. Here is what one self-identified progressive told reporters: "This is not a good idea. . . . It would not help the economy heal and it would not benefit the people who need help." These are the economists on their side? But forget about the experts. Forget about laid-off people. Forget about Middle America. The Speaker and the Democratic leader want to cut off funding for our war with the coronavirus unless they get this special carve-out.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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